

MEDICAL NUMISMATIC NOTES XI:
COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS ISSUED
AT THE INTERNATIONAL
PHYSIOLOGICAL CONGRESSES

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THE First International Physiological Congress was held in Basel in 1889 (Franklin¹) and was attended by 129 members. Since that time, these congresses have been held every three years, with the exception of the war years. They have grown in size and in nationalistic importance. For example, the congress in Rome (1932) was opened by Benito Mussolini and closed by an audience with Pope Pius XI. At many of the congresses commemorative medals were issued. It is the purpose of this paper to describe these medals.

At the Fifth Congress in Turin (Torino) in 1901, a metal plaque was presented to the members of the congress. It was a miniature of an early Greek altar which depicted Minerva Medica and Ceres (Science and Nature). It was described by Franklin² and illustrated in Brettauer. Since it was a plaque and not a medal, it will not be considered as the first medal.

The Sixth Congress held in Brussels (1904) issued the first commemorative medal. This medal honored the great anatomist, Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564). It is reproduced in Figure 1. A short description of this medal is given by Franklin.³ The next congress that issued a medal was the Seventh Congress, held in Heidelberg in 1907. According to Franklin,⁴ His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Baden presented this medal to the members of the congress. The medal (Figure 2) honored Helmholtz, professor of physiology at Heidelberg from 1858 to 1871.

At the Eighth Congress in Vienna (1910) a commemorative medal (Figure 3) honoring von Brücke (1819-1892) was issued to the members. It was a gift from the Ministry of Education (Franklin⁵). Ernst N. von Brücke was noted for his studies on phonetics, semilunar valves,



Fig. 1. Medal issued at Brussels (1904). Obverse, Andreas Vesalius. Jucunde et Tuto. Reverse, Hommage, A. Andre Vesale. Congrès International des Physiologistes Tenu a Bruxelles aux Instituts Solvay, 30 Aout 1904 3 Sept. Medal obtained through courtesy of Professor Rijlant. 50 mm.



Fig. 2. Medal issued at Heidelberg (1907). Obverse, Hermann von Helmholtz. Reverse, Den Teilnehmern am 7. Internat. Physiologen Kongress zu Heidelberg gewidmet von Grossherzog Friedrich von Baden, 1907. 60 mm. Photograph obtained through courtesy of Charles Marmoy, University College, London.

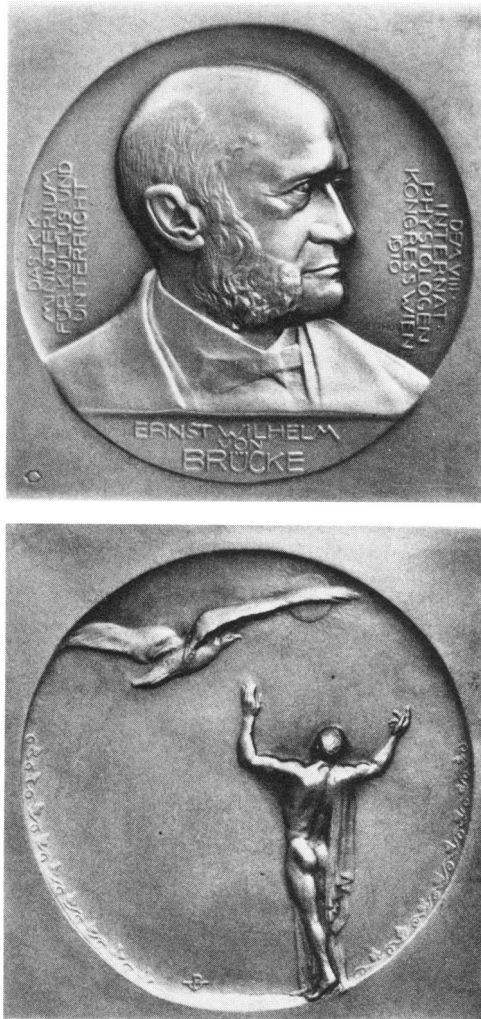


Fig. 3. Medal issued at Vienna, 1910. Obverse, Ernst Wilhelm von Brücke; Reverse, Man reaching to the light. 67 mm. Photograph obtained from American Numismatic Society, New York, N.Y.

tests for sugar in the urine, and studies of the luminosity of the eye.

The Ninth Congress was held in Groningen, Holland (1913). The medal (Franklin⁶) issued at this congress (Figure 4) honored Frans Cornelis Donders (1818-1888), the famous ophthalmologist and professor at Utrecht. Donders' book, *Anomalies of Refraction and Accommodation*, was an outstanding contribution.



Fig. 4. Medal issued at Groningen, 1913. Obverse, Frans Corn. Donders; Reverse, Ninth Intern. Physiologen Congress, 60 mm. In octagonal case. Photograph obtained from Charles Marmoy, University College, London.



Fig. 5. Medal issued at Paris, 1920. Obverse, M. F. Xavier Bichat; Reverse, Congrès de Physiologie, Paris, 1920. 40 mm. Photograph obtained from Charles Marmoy, University College, London.

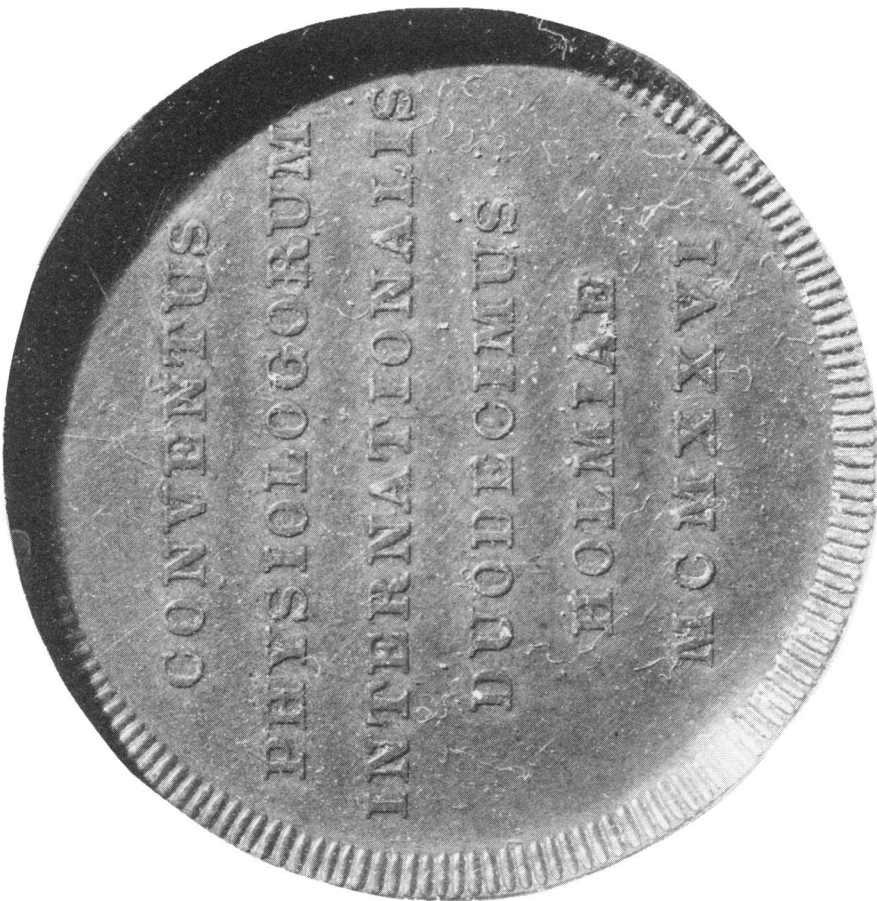


Fig. 6. Medal issued at Stockholm. Obverse, Carolus Wilh. Scheele; Reverse, Conventus Physiologorum Internationalis Duodecimus Holmiae, MCMXXVI. (Upper-right shadow was cast by container in which medal was photographed.) 36 mm. Photograph obtained from Charles Marnoy, University College, London.

The next congress was not held until 1920 on account of World War I. This congress (the 10th) met in Paris. Membership was restricted to delegates from allied and neutral countries. The medal (Figure 5) of this congress (Franklin⁷) was dedicated to Xavier Bichat (1771-1802), the creator of descriptive anatomy.

No medal was issued at the 11th Congress held in Edinburgh in 1923. At the following congress (the 12th), held at Stockholm in 1926, each member received a medal (Figure 6) featuring Carl Wilhelm Scheele (Franklin⁸). Scheele was the first to isolate uric acid in the urine.

The 13th Congress was held in Boston in 1929. Each member received a copy (Franklin⁹) of the Beaumont medal (Figures 7 and 4). The medal was inscribed on the obverse side "William Beaumont, A.D. 1785-1853" and, on the reverse, "XIII International Physiological Congress, Boston, 1929." In addition, each member received a facsimile of *Experiments and Observations on the Gastric Juice and the Physiology of Digestion*, published by Beaumont in 1833.

The 11th Congress was held in Rome in 1932. The medal (Franklin¹⁰) was very bold. It honored the famous Italian physiologist Spallanzani (1729-1799) on the obverse side (Figures 7 and 2) while the reverse side pictured the eagle and fasces.

The next congress, the 15th, was held in Leningrad and Moscow (1935). The medal (Franklin¹¹) was in honor of I. M. Sechenov (Figures 7 and 3), and was the largest issued by any country. Sechenov discovered the cerebral inhibition of spinal reflexes.

No medals were issued for the 16th Congress in Zurich (1938), the 17th Congress in Oxford (1947), the 18th Congress in Copenhagen (1950), or the 19th Congress in Montreal (1953).

At the 20th Congress in Brussels (1956) a medal was received by all members honoring Andreas Vesalius, similar to the 1904 medal (Figures 7 and 5).

No medal was issued at the 21st Congress in Buenos Aires, 1959 or at the 22d Congress in Leiden, 1962.

At the 23d Congress, held in Tokyo (1965), a medal was presented to all members. The obverse pictured a frog (Figures 7 and 1) taken from a famous scroll, "Frolicking Animals," of the 12th century.

This medal was the last to be issued, for no medal was presented to members at the 24th Congress in Washington, D.C. (1968), or the 25th Congress in Munich (1971).

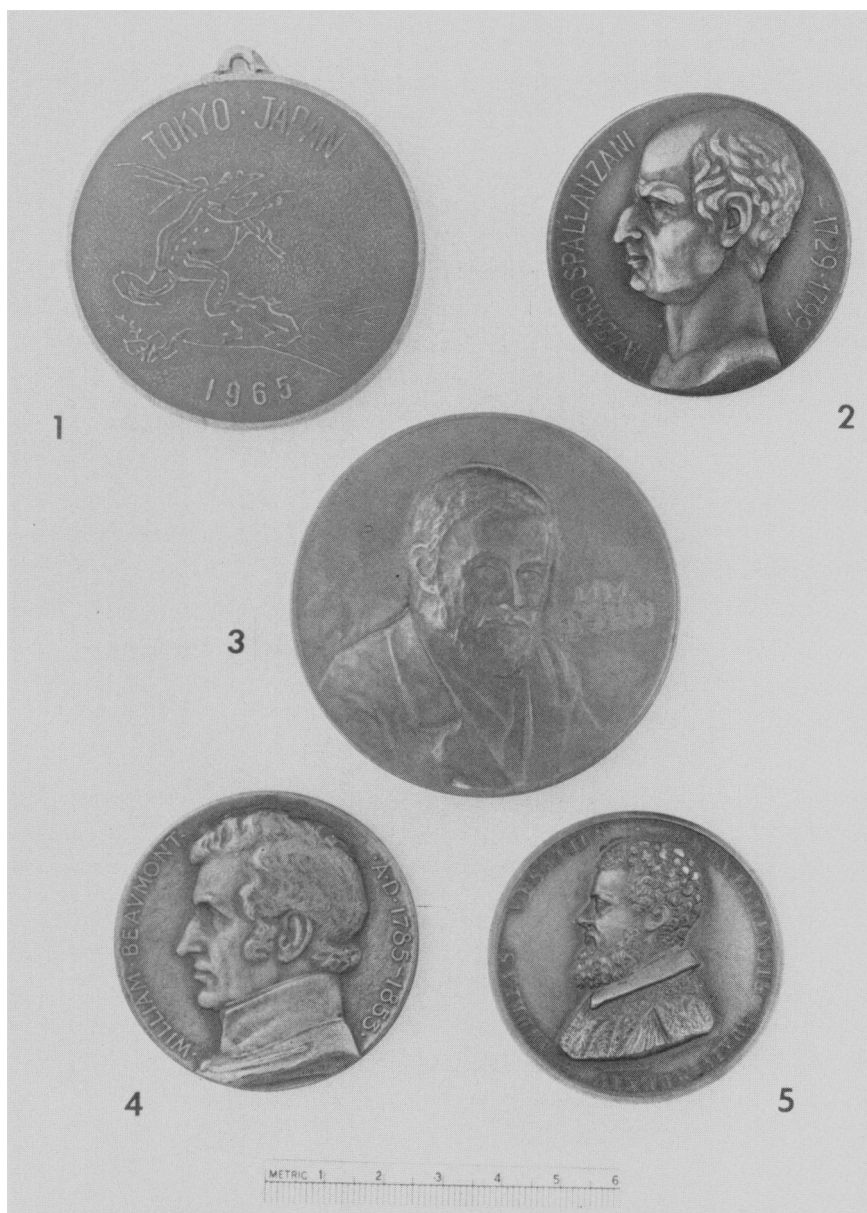


Fig. 7. 1) Medal issued at Tokyo, 1965. The obverse pictures a frog taken from a famous scroll of the 12th century. From the author's collection. Reverse of medals is given in right half of figure. 2) Medal issued at Rome, 1932. Obverse, Spallanzani. 50 mm. In author's collection. 3) Medal issued at Leningrad, 1935. Obverse, I. M. Sechenov.



65 mm. In author's collection. 4) Medal issued at Boston, 1929. Obverse, William Beaumont, 50 mm. In author's collection. 5) Medal issued at Brussels, 1956. Obverse, Andreas Vesalius. 48 mm. In author's collection.

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